

ORIGINAL

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2                   REMARKS OF HON. JANET RENO,  
3                   ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
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8                   Tuesday, October 24, 1995

9                   7:20 p.m.  
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13                   Bramlage Coliseum

14                   Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues

15                   Kansas State University

16                   Kimball Avenue between Denison & College Avenues

17                   Manhattan, Kansas  
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1 (Speech beginning at 7:20 p.m.)

2 Thank you so much for your warm welcome. I  
3 appreciate all of the efforts of all the organizers that made  
4 it possible for me to be here tonight, for it is a great  
5 privilege and a very great honor for me to deliver the 103rd  
6 Alf M. Landon Lecture on Public Issues.

7 It is a special honor, because although a Democrat,  
8 Governor Landon represents to me what public service is all  
9 about, both as Governor and as advisor. And I think it is  
10 fitting that this important lecture series with its focus on  
11 public issues stands as a lasting tribute to him and to his  
12 legacy and example of public service.

13 Part of that legacy is very special to me because  
14 Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum has been a wonderful mentor  
15 for me in Washington. She is an example, to me, of what  
16 public service should be about; thoughtful actions based on  
17 common sense, a sensitive bipartisanship, and you should be  
18 very proud that she represents this State so gallantly and so  
19 excellently.

20 This is a time of great challenge and great opportunity  
21 in the life of this nation. I see Americans rising to the  
22 challenge wherever I go. I see young people committed to  
23 public service. I have met wonderful public officials. I  
24 have seen caring Americans of all races and ethnic  
25 backgrounds working in their communities for the good of the

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1 people. But I have also, in these two and-a-half years that  
2 I have served as Attorney General, seen too many Americans  
3 isolated and alone, separate and apart from each other: It  
4 may be a three-year-old walking unsupervised across a housing  
5 development; an elderly person afraid to come out from behind  
6 their door because of the violence on her streets; rich  
7 separated from poor as more Americans become poorer; the  
8 professions too often isolated in their narrow disciplines,  
9 afraid to link with each other to solve the problems of the  
10 world; gated communities too often keep us apart.

11 While much has been done in this society to address  
12 injustices based on racial and ethnic backgrounds to bring  
13 together the differences between people, recent events remind  
14 us once again of the divisions that still exist between  
15 Americans of different races, and yet another indicator of  
16 separation and isolation.

17 Social scientists such as Harvard Professor Robert  
18 Putnam points to a decline in American involvement and  
19 traditional civic associations such as the PTA, the Elks, the  
20 League of Women Voters, the Boy Scouts or the Shriners.  
21 These civic associations have historically been the vehicles  
22 through which we have worked cooperatively to build  
23 communities. Thus, we find ourselves at a critical  
24 junction. Do we go it alone, by ourselves, each in our own  
25 way? Some may say it's an example of America's tradition of

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1 rugged individualism, but the history of this great nation  
2 teaches us to the contrary.

3         If we look at our history, if we look at our experience,  
4 it teaches us why we must come together. Our experience  
5 teaches us the value of community. In the 19th Century a  
6 keen observer of American society, Frenchman Alexis DeTotble,  
7 wrote with great admiration of the American tendency to reach  
8 beyond family, to find linkages with the broader community to  
9 form a strong, civic culture.

10         The history of this great State teaches us similar  
11 lessons. At the heart is the bold, individual pioneer spirit  
12 that developed the vast and beautiful Kansas landscape, one I  
13 saw tonight as I came in with a magnificent sunset. At the  
14 heart of all of that were a series of communities,  
15 communities of people who boldly set themselves upon the  
16 historic Chisholm or Santa Fe Trail or upon one of the many  
17 other historic pathways that cross this state to find better  
18 lives for their families. Yes, these were communities of  
19 caring people who were never too busy to help their neighbor  
20 with a barn raising or a community harvest. These were  
21 communities of people who provided the underlying support  
22 upon which the pioneering efforts were built. This land was  
23 settled by brave souls but not by souls in isolation.

24         I have seen another example, a stark and dark one for me  
25 initially, for on August the 24th, 1992, in Miami, at three

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1 o'clock in the morning I heard the winds of Hurricane Andrew  
2 begin to howl. For four hours it wrecked a devastation  
3 across the land. As we came out in the dawn we saw a world  
4 split apart and turned upside down as we talked to people, as  
5 we walked around. In those days that followed we saw a fear  
6 and isolation and aloneness. We saw the results of  
7 isolation. We saw those brief hours when physical forces had  
8 broken the bonds of community, but then I watched that  
9 American spirit come forward. I watched people come  
10 together. I watched police working with citizens as they  
11 worked 36 hours without stopping. I watched black and white  
12 together stand in intersections directing traffic, just of  
13 their own volition. I saw the elderly come out from behind  
14 doors to mind children of neighbors so that they could help  
15 to clean up and to get food for all. I saw the community's  
16 most prominent citizens working side by side to help restore  
17 housing projects, and I saw not only the people of that  
18 community respond, I saw this nation respond with supplies,  
19 with help, with people who drove hundreds of miles to help,  
20 to be involved, to be counted. Countless brave souls  
21 overcame Hurricane Andrew but they were not souls in  
22 isolation.

23 And then more recently, on April the 19th, 1995, I saw  
24 the tragedy of Oklahoma City. On that Sunday that followed I  
25 came to Oklahoma City for the Memorial Service and I watched

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1 a strength of community that I will never, ever forget. I  
2 watched the people come together to speak out against the  
3 violence that had spawned that blast, to reach out to victims  
4 and to their survivors and to help them begin to heal, to  
5 reach out to help and to support law enforcement, and to  
6 stand up and to defend this nation we love. We have seen  
7 what America can do when it comes together.

8 Now, as we stand on the cusp of a new century,  
9 communities with their backs to the wall and an array of  
10 problems staring them in the face are building partnerships,  
11 engaging citizens, and moving forward to deal with the issues  
12 and the challenges they face. But as we do so we must  
13 confront together a crisis in this nation, a crisis of  
14 isolation, the isolation of our young people, the youth  
15 violence that is spawns. Youth violence is probably one of  
16 the greatest single crime problems in America today.

17 We must confront the fact that according to a recent  
18 Carnegie Corporation Report, young adolescents from all  
19 economic strata often find themselves alone in a community  
20 where there are few adults and no safe places to go.

21 Ladies and Gentlemen, a close look at the nation's young  
22 people discloses something that is very alarming. Since 1985  
23 we have seen an increase in the level of youth violence that  
24 is simply staggering, particularly for youth age 14 to 17.  
25 The tragedy of this youth violence produces similarly tragic

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1 corollary; youth as the victims of that violence. This surge  
2 in youth violence is particularly frightening when we realize  
3 that it occurred, for the most part, in a period when the  
4 number of young people in the category of age 14 to 17 was  
5 decreasing in the United States. The distressing story that  
6 we must confront is that as the number of young people in  
7 this age category was falling the percentage of those youth  
8 committing homicide was rising steeply. The nation's  
9 demographic data, made quite clear, that the next 20 years  
10 will produce a significant increase in the number of young  
11 people, 14 to 17, unmistakably as the current rise of youth  
12 violence presages the next generation of even more tragic  
13 crime and violence unless we do something now.

14 The Carnegie Corporation's new report, Preparing  
15 Adolescents for a New Century, describes the more general  
16 situation in which our young people find themselves. As it  
17 says: Across America today adolescents are confronted with  
18 pressures to use alcohol, cigarettes or other drugs and to  
19 have sex at an earlier age; many are depressed; about  
20 one-third of adolescents report that they have contemplated  
21 suicide; others are growing up lacking the competence to  
22 handle interpersonal conflict without resorting to violence.  
23 By age 17, about one-quarter of all adolescents have engaged  
24 in behaviors that are harmful or dangerous to themselves or  
25 others, getting pregnant, using drugs, taking part in

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1 antisocial activity and failing in school. All together,  
2 nearly half of America's adolescents are at high or moderate  
3 risk of seriously damaging their life chances. The damage  
4 may be near term and vivid or it may be delayed like a time  
5 bomb set in youth.

6 In this situation, exacerbated by the resources of  
7 neighborhood networks and other traditional social support  
8 systems, children now spend significantly less time, the  
9 report goes on to say, in the company of adults than a few  
10 years ago. More of their time is spent in front of the  
11 television set or with their peers in an age segregated,  
12 unsupervised environment. Noting, the report says, that such  
13 conditions are more severe in neighborhoods of poverty. It  
14 stressed, however, that such conditions occur among families  
15 of all income levels and backgrounds and in cities, suburbs  
16 and rural areas.

17 Wherever we go in America, too many of our youth are  
18 afraid, alone and angry. Where do we begin? It is time to  
19 come together, to reach out and reweave the fabric of society  
20 and community around our youth. As our forefathers went west  
21 together, as they raised barns together, as we came through  
22 the tragedy of Oklahoma City together, let us come together  
23 to build a future for our youth and to speak out against the  
24 violence and the isolation that too often surrounds them.

25 Each of us has a role to play: The business man; the

1 Doctor; the police officer; the homemaker; the local and  
2 Federal governments; the local civic associations; the  
3 church; the elderly volunteer. I will always remember a man  
4 I met at a community meeting in Miami that stood up and  
5 said: Do you know how old I am and what I do three days a  
6 week? He explained he was 84 years old and that for three  
7 mornings a week, three hours each day, he volunteers as a  
8 teacher's aide for a first grade teacher. A young woman was  
9 seated next to him and she stood up and said she was the  
10 First Grade teacher and that the children who had learning  
11 disabilities in her class could not wait for their time with  
12 this gentleman because he had the patience of Job and gave  
13 them such wonderful opportunities and gifts, and that the  
14 children could not wait to meet with him because he enabled  
15 them to travel beyond the sunset and the valleys of all the  
16 western stars through his imagination.

17 It doesn't make any difference how old we are or where  
18 we come from, we can all touch the lives of our children and  
19 give them a sense of a community but we must start early. We  
20 cannot wait until the child is in trouble. It is often too  
21 late by then, but there are real things that we can do to  
22 make a difference in the lives of our children. We can  
23 support community policing, programs where police involve  
24 themselves with the neighbors they serve in identifying the  
25 problems and identifying the priorities of that community or

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1 that neighborhood; police officers working with the community  
2 to build trust, not to build suspicion, not to create  
3 isolation; police officers working with the young people in  
4 the community to provide support and to be mentors.  
5 Community policing is a powerful tool.

6 Throughout the country we have heard stories of how it  
7 has been working in these last years. In Lowell,  
8 Massachusetts, where for the first time in 25 years they had  
9 a year pass without a single homicide, community policing has  
10 brought renewed peace of mind and safety to residents. That  
11 is the power of community policing and that power is being  
12 unleashed as we move forward in the Justice Department this  
13 year to put 25,000 community police officers on the streets  
14 of this nation where they count. For as we work together, we  
15 must reach out and hold our young people accountable when  
16 they do wrong. We must love them enough not to give up on  
17 them but to work with them to let them know that there will  
18 be fair, firm, certain punishment when they hurt others when  
19 they lash out. But we must also let them know that with the  
20 punishment comes after care and support as they return to the  
21 community; otherwise, they will become part of a revolving  
22 door.

23 We can do so much through community based after school  
24 and evening programs where youth can make a real contribution  
25 to reducing crime and violence amongst our young people if

1 they can be involved in efforts and if we give them positive  
2 programs to participate in. Statistical data tells us that  
3 the offending rate for young people rises dramatically after  
4 three o'clock in the afternoon when the kids are generally  
5 released from school. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent  
6 Development concluded that communities should provide more  
7 attractive, safe, growth promoting settings for young  
8 adolescents during the out of school hours, the time of  
9 high-risk when parents are often not available to supervise  
10 their children.

11 In this country there are more than 17,000 national and  
12 local youth organizations including those sponsored by  
13 religious groups, but they do not adequately provide support  
14 or provide opportunities for about one-third of the young  
15 people who most need their support and guidance. These  
16 organizations must now work, said the report, to expand their  
17 reach, enlisting the help of community residents, families,  
18 schools, volunteers and adolescents themselves in offering  
19 more activities that convey information about life, careers  
20 and places beyond the neighborhood, as well as to engage them  
21 in public service and other constructive services.  
22 Communities must play the role, the lead role in creating and  
23 supporting these efforts but there is an important Federal  
24 support role as well.

25 One of the things that pleased me most about the 1994

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1 Crime Act was that it provided monies to fund these kinds of  
2 programs in communities around the country. The Federal  
3 Government needs to support local community initiatives and  
4 the Crime Act has pointed us in that direction.

5 Thirdly, through mentoring efforts we can now make a  
6 meaningful connection with a young person. The Department of  
7 Justice is supporting efforts around the country that seek to  
8 connect caring, committed adults to young people who need  
9 that positive connection to help direct their lives in a  
10 positive way. But the private sector has also played a key  
11 role in sponsoring mentoring programs. One program that has  
12 produced impressive results that demonstrates the potential  
13 of mentoring is the Quantum Opportunities Program. Funded by  
14 the Ford Foundation, Quantum has had a real impact on youth  
15 in Philadelphia; Saginaw, Michigan; and Oklahoma City.  
16 Through this program mentors provide sustained support,  
17 guidance and real assistance to high school students over a  
18 four year period. Students were required to participate in a  
19 range of activities including academic related activities  
20 outside of school hours and community service projects. The  
21 program results have been impressive. Sixty-three percent of  
22 the participants graduated from high school, 42 percent are  
23 currently enrolled in college; that's compared to 42 percent  
24 and 16 percent respectively for those not involved in the  
25 Quantum Program. Mentoring can make a difference.

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1 Two years ago I went to a detention facility in Omaha,  
2 Nebraska. I always try to ask young people who have been in  
3 trouble or who are in trouble: What could have been done to  
4 prevent the problem in the first place? And the answer is  
5 always the same. It was most vivid that afternoon when the  
6 young man in detention said: I just wish I would have had  
7 somebody to talk to, somebody who understands how hard it is  
8 to grow up, somebody who could give me a pat on the back when  
9 I needed it and to chew me out when I needed that too. Each  
10 of us can make a difference.

11 Fourthly, we must do all we can as communities to insure  
12 that our children get the education they need to be  
13 competitive in the 21st Century. I remember my elementary  
14 school. I remember the names of all of my teachers and they  
15 were so important in my life. We have got to let this nation  
16 know how important our teachers are. We have got to make  
17 being a teacher as important as being a lawyer. We have got  
18 to do something about the fact that this nation pays its  
19 football players in the six-digit figures and it pays its  
20 teachers what we pay them, and we have got to correct that if  
21 we are going to make a difference.

22 But we must also focus on a new part of education. For  
23 so long there was a parent at home with the small children  
24 but now there is either a single parent or both parents are  
25 working and we must make sure we provide not just child care

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1 but educare for those terribly formative years in a child's  
2 life.

3 As a prosecutor in Dade County I was required to figure  
4 out what to do about crack involved infants and their  
5 mothers: Whether to prosecute the mother, whether to pursue  
6 dependency proceedings for the child. And the doctors took  
7 me to a large public hospital, to the neonatal unit, to  
8 observe these children. At that point the epidemic was  
9 cresting. The community had not been prepared and there were  
10 babies in the bassinets who had not been changed or talked to  
11 or held except when changed and fed and they weren't really  
12 responding. Whereas, children with severe defects born at  
13 birth, with birth defects, were across the room beginning to  
14 respond to their pain with human emotion. Those ages of zero  
15 to three are so critical, and as we consider education we  
16 must consider educare in its finest sense. If we can teach  
17 people to spell, if we can teach our children how to do  
18 arithmetic, we can teach them how to resolve conflicts  
19 without knives and guns and fists. We, through the great  
20 power of our teachers, can teach them how to appreciate the  
21 differences in each, to appreciate the differences in races  
22 and ethnic backgrounds if we start early.

23 We must use our schools to prepare our young people for  
24 work. Our whole School to Work Program can make such a  
25 difference. I have often wondered why we have high school

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1 graduation requirements that did not include or do not  
2 include a requirement that we graduate with a skill that can  
3 enable us to earn a living wage. And somebody said: Well,  
4 but I'm going to college. But how many people have you met  
5 that have a BA in English Lit that are sitting around trying  
6 to figure out what they are going to do because they don't  
7 have a skill until they go to graduate school?

8 We can do so much if we work together, if we develop a  
9 partnership with the business community and local educational  
10 facilities, if we teach our children the international  
11 dimensions of this world and global consequences of all we  
12 do.

13 We must keep our kids in school. The connection between  
14 truancy and subsequent offending is power. Through a joint  
15 effort with the Department of Education we have produced an  
16 initiative to help communities deal more effectively with the  
17 problem of children who are falling out of the main stream of  
18 our educational system, but this is an area where local  
19 community based leadership will be crucial.

20 This nation has made great strides in dealing with the  
21 problem of illegal drug use since the '80s, but there is  
22 still more to be done. We are having great success on the  
23 fronts and in our towns against the cartels. We are making  
24 inroads against drug related violence in our communities but  
25 there is still, still much to be done, particularly when we

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1 recognize that drugs are still prevalent amongst our young.  
2 We must renew our efforts to educate our children about drugs  
3 and to reaffirm prevention efforts that have proved  
4 successful across this country. I don't know what you call  
5 the Red Ribbon Council here, but in terms of the Miami  
6 Coalition, in terms of the community and people coming  
7 together from all walks of life, they can be so effective in  
8 terms of the development of prevention programs.

9 And finally we must give our young people an opportunity  
10 to serve. They want so to be somebody. They want so to make  
11 a contribution and to feel like they have helped other  
12 people. And we see young people taking up the President's  
13 challenge to engage in national service through AmeriCorp.  
14 These young people are responding powerfully and positively  
15 to the President's call to give something back to their  
16 country and to their communities. I am proud that many of  
17 these AmeriCorp service workers are working with the  
18 Department of Justice to enhance public safety and to build  
19 strong communities in some of our Operation Weed and Seed  
20 neighborhoods around the country. Others are working to  
21 insure that children are immunized, while other manual  
22 service workers are building and renovating homes for poor  
23 families. I am heartened when I see that kind of response  
24 for a call to service and I think this nation needs to  
25 continue to find ways to encourage that spirit.

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1 But communities cannot succeed by themselves, because to  
2 give our adolescents a chance we must give them a strong  
3 foundation and early childhood is so vitally important, as I  
4 learned in that visit to that neonatal unit. What those  
5 child development experts taught me was that 50 percent of  
6 all learned human response is learned in the first year of  
7 life. During the first three years of life the child  
8 develops the concept of reward and punishment and develops a  
9 conscious. There is no substitute during that period of life  
10 for a strong and caring family.

11 Raising children is the single most difficult thing I  
12 know to do. About ten years ago a friend died leaving me as  
13 the legal guardian of her 15 year old twins, a boy and a  
14 girl. The girl was in love and I have learned an awful lot  
15 about raising children in the last ten years. It takes hard  
16 work, love and intelligence and an awful lot of luck but  
17 there is nothing as rewarding. I will never forget putting  
18 that young lady on the plane and then going to see her  
19 graduate in three years Cum Laude, and on each occasion she  
20 threw her arms around my neck and said: Thank you, I  
21 couldn't have done it without you. Being Attorney General  
22 has been a great honor but nothing can compare with what you  
23 can do if you reach out to children.

24 This Administration has taken steps to recognize that  
25 there are caring, wonderful families in this nation that need

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1 just a little bit of support to reinforce what they are doing  
2 with their children. The Administration has led the way to  
3 expand the Earned Income Tax Credit which is crucial for  
4 working families who are working hard and doing all they can  
5 to give their children a full range of opportunities. We  
6 must continue to support the Earned Income Tax Credit which  
7 enjoys a long history of bipartisan support. President  
8 Reagan once called it the best anti-poverty, the best  
9 pro-family, the best job creation measure to come out of  
10 Congress. We have led the way in the enactment of the Family  
11 and Medical Leave Act which supports families by giving  
12 working people the opportunity to be with their loved ones  
13 during the crucial times in the life of a family, and we have  
14 focused on domestic and family violence.

15 When I first served as a prosecutor in 1978 in Miami  
16 judges and police officers would look at me and say: But  
17 that's just a domestic. But we did a study with the Medical  
18 Examiner in Dade County and found that 40 percent of the  
19 homicides in the county during the previous 20 years were  
20 related to domestic violence; husband, wife, boyfriend,  
21 girlfriend, ex-spouses. It's not too much different now.  
22 About two years ago I participated in a fiber-optic hookup in  
23 Iowa with 15 cities or towns. They had met for about an hour  
24 before to establish their priorities, Police Chiefs and other  
25 community leaders. In approximately 8 of the 15 cities or

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1 towns domestic violence was at the top. Why is it so  
2 important? Because the child who watches his father beat his  
3 mother comes to accept violence as a way of life and unless  
4 we start to intervene and tell the world that we will not  
5 tolerate this type of violence we will see it handed down  
6 from one generation to another.

7 But supporting families is not just something the  
8 Government should do. All sectors in the American community  
9 need to lend a hand in providing this crucial support. I  
10 look at young parents today struggling to get breakfast on  
11 the table, the children dressed and off to school. They get  
12 home through rush hour, they get dinner on the table, the  
13 children bathed, the homework done, and everybody collapses  
14 in bed. They run errands on Saturday and go to church on  
15 Sunday and then start to prepare for the next day on Sunday  
16 evening and they don't have quality time with their  
17 children.

18 I remember my afternoons after school and during the  
19 summer. My mother worked in the home. She taught us to play  
20 baseball, to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies. She taught  
21 us to play fair, she punished us, she loved us with all her  
22 heart, and there is no child care in the world that will ever  
23 be the substitute for what that lady was in our life.

24 Somehow, if we can send a man to the moon we ought to be  
25 able to develop workplaces which are far more family

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1 friendly. This is an area where technology can help to  
2 support our family and community building efforts with flex  
3 time, job sharing, telecommuting and other workplace policies  
4 that allow working parents to become involved in the lives of  
5 their children. What so many principals will tell you is  
6 that they can't get parents to come to school. Let's start  
7 giving parental leave for just a little bit of school time.

8 Many American businesses are taking the lead in this  
9 area and really make a difference for families around this  
10 country. Some of these companies are making flexible  
11 schedules available to parents and are finding their rates of  
12 tardiness and absenteeism are reduced. Others are going even  
13 further and in addition to providing job sharing, condensed  
14 work weeks and telecommuting they are offering informational  
15 videos and materials on child care, parenting and other  
16 concerns to help parents balance work and family demands.  
17 These efforts can make such a difference.

18 So much of what we face seems so daunting, the problems  
19 seem so large, the homicides, the statistics so grim. I have  
20 no doubt that we can meet this challenge for I remember  
21 looking at the devastation of the hurricane and wondering how  
22 we would rebuild. I remember looking up at the Murrah  
23 Building and wondering how a city would cope. We know the  
24 answers.

25 What does the future hold for our children? These are

1 our most precious possessions, these are our future. I think  
2 I know the answer. As a matter of fact, I'm sure I know the  
3 answer. Wherever I go in this nation I see people starting  
4 to work together across social, economic and racial divides,  
5 in both traditional ways and new ways, to address the  
6 problems they face in their local communities. It may seem  
7 dawning but I see America accepting the challenge, I see  
8 America coming forward together unafraid, and I know that  
9 child by child, family by family, block by block, school by  
10 school, city by city, state by state, that we will build the  
11 thriving and healthy communities across this great nation  
12 that all of us want for ourselves and for our families.

13 Thank you and good night.

14 (WHEREUPON, Attorney General Janet Reno's  
15 speech was concluded at 8:00 p.m.)  
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